

HANDLING INDICATOR

FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

FROM : Amembassy ASUNCION

41

NO.

TO : THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON.

August 18, 1961

DATE

REF

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SUBJECT: Argentines and Paraguayans Clash Over Change in Course of River

Transmitted as Enclosure No. 1 is a Memorandum of Conversation between Ambassador SNOW and Dr. Rubén RAMIREZ Pane on the subject of a recent clash between Argentine and Paraguayan armed forces resulting from a change in the course of the Pilcomayo River.

According to Dr. Ramirez Pane the head of the Argentine Gendarmeria, General Luis Ventura MORON, came to Asunción last week for an interview with President Alfredo STROESSNER as a result of the incident. President Stroessner is reported to have sent reinforcements to the area and to have told General Morón that Paraguay took a serious view of the situation because it had already lost four provinces to Argentina and was gradually losing territory now as a result of the river's tendency to change its channel northward.

Dr. Ramirez Pane is a confidant of President Stroessner and an Acting Member of the Colorado Party Junta. As such he often has access to confidential information within Government circles. A military source has confirmed that such an incident took place some time ago but was dismissed by military authorities as being of little importance.

For the Ambassador:

A. Dane Bowen, Jr.
A. Dane Bowen, Jr.

Second Secretary of Embassy

Enclosure: *all m.m.*

Memorandum of Conversation

DEPARTMENT: Please pass to Buenos Aires and La Paz

POL:ADBowen, Jr.:my

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FORM 6-61 FS-439 GPO 912596

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ACTION	ACTION	
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CLASSIFIED FILE

(Classification)

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Desp. No. 41
From AsunciónMEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Date: August 18, 1961

PARTICIPANTS: Dr. Rubén RAMÍREZ Pane, Acting Member of
Colorado Party Junta and Confidant
of President STROESSNER

Ambassador William P. SNOW

A. Dane BOWEN, Jr., Political Officer

PLACE: The Ambassador's Office

DATE: August 8, 1961, 8:45 AM

SUBJECT: Argentines and Paraguayans Clash Over Boundary

Ambassador Snow and Dr. Ramírez Pane exchange greetings, pleasantries, and remembrances of the Ambassador's visit to Paraguay at the time of President Alfredo Stroessner's second inauguration in 1958. Both recalled episodes of the visit, and the Ambassador referred to an educational tour which the two had made together. Dr. Ramírez Pane complimented the Ambassador on his excellent memory, and the Ambassador replied that one could always remember places one had enjoyed visiting.

Mr. Bowen remarked that before being ushered into the Ambassador's office Dr. Ramírez Pane had started to recount what seemed to be an interesting episode in Paraguayan-Argentine relations.

Dr. Ramírez Pane said that an incident had just taken place as a result of a change in course of the Pilcomayo River, which forms the international boundary between the Argentine Chaco and the Paraguayan Chaco. Recounting what was apparently a prelude to the incident, Dr. Ramírez Pane stated that recently while the First Vice President of Congress, J. Augusto SALDIVAR, was vacationing in Buenos Aires, he was taken on a tour of the harbor and that various Argentine military officers took advantage of the visit to load him down with maps and documents purporting to show the correct boundary along the river.

Dr. Ramírez Pane said that a few days ago a clash took place along the Pilcomayo near a ranch called La Verde. Going to a wall map Dr. Ramírez Pane pointed to an area between Esteros, Paraguay,

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Desp. No. 11

From: Asunción

and General Delgado, Paraguay, where the Pilcomayo is in the act of changing course. He pointed out that an old river bed so far distance south of the present boundary was marked on the map as cauce seco del Pilcomayo. He also pointed to a swampy area running through Fortín Tinfunque some 20 kilometers north of the present Pilcomayo where the river might eventually take its channel.

Dr. Ramírez Pane stated that recently the river had cut a course farther northward, with 90 square kilometers of territory left between it and the thalweg. Last week a force of some forty Argentine troopers who attempted to enter the area were turned back by the gunfire of a Paraguayan corporal and two privates.

As a result of the clash, Dr. Ramírez Pane continued, the head of the Argentine Gendarmería, General Luis Ventura MORON, came to Asunción last week for an interview with President Alfredo Stroessner. The President, according to Dr. Ramírez Pane, told General Morón that Paraguay took a serious view of the incident because she had already lost territory along the river in addition to the loss of four provinces to Argentina. Dr. Ramírez Pane stated that General Morón turned red in the face at this remark. President Stroessner went on to tell General Morón that upon hearing of the clash the same morning he, Stroessner, airshipped 60 troops to the area who were armed with automatic weapons.

Dr. Ramírez Pane said that, according to the President, the Argentines had built a small dam to assist the river in its peripatetic tendencies northward.

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